

Astrovision Shoots For The Stars

Astrovision, Inc., has lost no time in shooting for the lead in the 1982 video game wars.

Finishing up last year with its entire production capacity sold out, the company is unveiling what vice president Ray George describes as a "revolutionary new dimension in video games," and a graphics videogame/computer that "talks." And underway as of January 6 is a \$10 million 1982 television advertising campaign.

Seven new adventure video games "combine, for the first time, the fast-paced excitement of coin-operated arcade space games with the intrigue of home-computer 'adventure'-style games," explained George.

Munchie, The Wizard, Solar Conqueror, Cosmic Raiders, Space Fortress, Pirate's Chase and Quest For The Orb run on the Astro Professional Arcade (formerly the Bally Video Professional Arcade) and are priced between \$24.95 and \$35.95. Except for Space Fortress, which is available now, the games are slated for a March delivery.

Astrovision is also introducing 2

games in the same price range that combine education and fun: Coloring Book with Light Pen (for creating art) and Music Maker (for creating music).

ZGRASS-32, the new graphics videogame/computer, is the only personal unit that is designed specifically for computer graphics and the only one with NTSC broadcast quality video output, making it possible to create animated graphics, music, sound effects and original animated games.

Consumers can start out with an Astro Professional Arcade video



Astrovision Inc.'s Astro Professional Arcade

game unit and add a personal computer attachment (keyboard and 32K ROM) to get the ZGRASS-32.

"We've already received orders for thousands of ZGRASS-32 units from Bally Arcade owners," continued George. "They're anxious to get their hands on it because the tremendous power of the ZGRASS language combined with the patented Astro Arcade chips will let them create exciting 256-color animation, sound effects, three-voice music, and now speech."

Using a Votrax chip which gives it unlimited vocabulary, the ZGRASS-32 is Z-80 micro-processor based, is expandable to run CP/M programs and has built-in interfaces to a light pen, graphics tablet, disk drives and joysticks. It also has 2 RS-232 ports for 50 to 19,200 baud communications.

The ZGRASS-32 is being shipped to video game and personal computer dealers in April, with a suggested retail price of under \$100 (included the Astro Arcade).

Private-Label Blank Tapes: What's In A Name?

Private-label blank tapes are not meant to replace national brands, but they do offer a retailer the chance to increase turns and profits while publicizing the store's name, according to the newly formed Tramar Corp., which manufacturers premium private-label blank audio and video cassettes.

"The point is to help the retailer upgrade his visibility and image," said Tramar's president, Marshall Mitzman. "Low-end tapes have their place, but a dealer shouldn't put his name on low-end merchandise."

Private-label premium products are nothing new, but Mitzman said his San Jose, CA, company goes further than his competitors.

"Our minimum order is very reasonable — only 1,008 cassettes — making it feasible for even

small retailers to add a private-label line," he explained.

"Additionally, for every order placed, we offer 5 percent co-op advertising dollars and another 5 percent for an advertising order. That means a dealer can have as much as 10 percent co-op available during a time when many nationally advertised brands are cutting their co-op dollars."

The shells and tape are sold with a lifetime warranty, he said. Other manufacturers don't offer a warranty on the video cassette's mechanism, he added.

The standard-bias tapes come packaged in sets of three, either C-60s or C-90s — Mitzman called them "the bread and butter sellers". They carry approximate suggested retail prices of \$4.99 to \$5.99 for the C-60s and \$5.99 to \$6.99 for the C-90s, depending on

an individual dealer's margins.

The video line is limited to one T-120 VHS cassette, priced at approximately \$11, but there are plans to expand as long as demand does not outweigh availability, Mitzman said.

Tramar also has a second division, which represents audio and video accessory manufacturers. The minimum orders on the cassette head cleaners and record cleaning kits are a bit higher, but Mitzman said the "turns are good."

"If a retailer is to be competitive in today's market, he has to find ways of maintaining decent profit margins," Mitzman concluded about his private-label offerings. "The big brand names are so widely distributed, price-cutting is often the only recourse to get people in to your store."